

First Michigan 'Adoption Day' hosted Nov. 25

Michigan will give thanks to adoptive families on Tuesday, November 25, during the first state Adoption Day, an event sponsored by the Michigan Supreme Court and Family Independence Agency (FIA).

With assistance from local FIA offices and private adoption agencies, courts in 33 counties will finalize adoptions for more than 200 children that day, hold celebrations for adoptive families, and provide information about the adoption process. FIA Director Nannette Bowler said this is the first time Michigan has ever held a statewide event to celebrate adoptions.

Oakland County will take part in the Adoption Day as announced by Oakland County Probate Court Judge Eugene A. Moore and Margaret Warner, acting director of Oakland County FIA.



Eugene A. Moore

"We're very excited about this event," Moore said. "In most cases, people are not happy to come to court. Adoptions are the exception—a joyous occasion for families, the court, Family Independence Agency, local adoption agen-

cies . . . and especially the children."

"Adoption is the only answer for children who can never return home because of abuse and neglect," Warner said. "There are children in our community available for adoption, waiting for loving families to them a permanent, safe home."

At the end of September, there were 12,701 children who were temporary wards in Michigan – children made wards of the court as a result of child protective proceedings – and there were 19,490 children in Michigan's foster care program.

For most children in the foster care program, their return home to an abuse-free home is the goal.

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There are 4,584 permanent wards in care with a goal of adoption. Many of these children have a family identified and are in the process of having that adoption finalized – like the adoptions that will take place around Michigan on November 25. However, the most current Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange listing shows about 400 permanent state wards available for adoption who do not have an adoptive family identified. The FIA is actively recruiting adoptive homes for these children.

The November 25 event will help celebrate National Adoption Month in November, where November 22 has been designated National Adoption Day. Although a number of courts and other states are participating in National Adoption Day activities, national organizers say the Michigan event appears to be the largest statewide

event in the country.

Oakland County will be finalizing adoptions for 16 children on Adoption Day. Moore along with Oakland County Probate Court Judges Linda S. Hallmark, chief judge, and Elizabeth Pezzetti will hear the cases.

Following the hearings, adoptive families, their extended families, and friends will join the judges, adoption department staff, and FIA administrators for refreshments.

"Lifebooks," similar to the standard "babybooks" used by biological parents, will be given to all new families in attendance. Proceedings will be open to the public as permitted by the families involved.

To acquire an updated listing of other courts participating in Michigan Adoption Day, go to <http://www.courts.michigan.gov/supremecourt/Press/MichiganAdoptionDayIndex.htm>.